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**Uneven Development and Regionalism:  
A Critique of Received Theories**

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## **Abstract**

This paper attempts at critically examining various theoretical approaches concerning uneven development and regionalism. Major theories propounded by the neo-classical regional school, institutionalists, political economists and, finally, modern geographers have been interpreted with reference to their strengths and weaknesses. Though modern geographers do provide a sensible analysis of causes of uneven development, perpetuation of backwardness in the developing country context awaits deeper thinking. Moreover, the rise of a strange brand of apolitical neo-localism in recent decades has further diluted any meaningful quest in this direction. Given this, typical interventionist strategies, based upon experiences of matured capitalist societies, are still tried out, *uncritically*, in the developing countries as possible solutions to the problematique of uneven development and regionalism.

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# Uneven Development and Regionalism: A Critique of Received Theories

*Keshab Das*

## 1. Introduction

The absence of attention on issues of regional distribution of productive activity has been recognised as a significant lapse in the classical economic literature, which has eventually neglected any explanation of the growing and stark regional imbalances, especially that followed the Industrial Revolution. The unquestionable linearity and the unruffled functionality of the rather naive assumption, that capital would move where costs would be the lowest so that maximum profits could be obtained and labour would migrate to those areas where wages would be the highest, remained a fundamental problem with the classical economists. The complacency regarding the regional questions in myriad forms, contents and contexts was carried over even to the phase of the so-called "emergence or resurgence of interest in the spatial aspects of development and planning" (Brookfield, 1977: 85) in the beginning of the twentieth century. Apart from being only partially integrated to the central themes of the development economics, *regional economics* served "mainly as a background prop to the scenario of classical or neo-classical theory" (Holland, 1976: 1).

## 2. Marginalists, Location and Self-balance

A reasonably perspicacious enquiry into the issue of uneven development - referring to the interrelationships between structural and spatial inequality - as fundamentally a manifestation of inherent imbalances in the capitalistic development process itself, was, of course, to be found in Von Thunen (1826) and later in Marx. Whereas von Thunen provided an analytical base to the location of farm activity with reference to the city, Marx discussed the *antagonism* between village and the town (Marx, 1983: 600-602).

Ironically, the massive literature on neo-classical regional economics, that owed its intellectual origin particularly to the former, became predominant and was silent

about its 'social implications'. The prominent early protagonists of this approach include Weber (1965), Christaller (1933), Losch (1967) and Ohlin (1933). The incredible rise and spread of the modern bourgeois *regional science* almost legitimised its abstraction from the social and spatial inequality, as if the dynamics of the *economy* was exclusive to that of the society, polity, dominant culture and history.<sup>1</sup> But there was no stopping. What essentially it has meant for regional economics "is the dominance of the marginalist approach, the emphasis on resource allocation through the market in respect of housing, transport, pollution rights, etc., and the corresponding neglect of historical and institutional aspects, the social relations of production, the role of the state in relation to the class structure, and so on" (Stilwell, 1978: 18-19).

Whereas majority of the neo-classical regional development theory is replete with discussions relating to explaining the spatial pattern of development and/or correcting the imbalances, "their concern about 'space' has been reduced to the simple location of social phenomena in geographical space, where cost-distance, time and physical characteristics play the decisive role" (Hadjimichalis, 1987: 29).

The term *development* seems to have occupied the centre stage, particularly with the economists, since the end of the World War II. Concern with the *change in the desired direction*, treated purely from an economically deterministic point of view, has given rise to a massive literature that came to be known as development theories. However, in the absence of any substantial development experiences, except the sporadic cases of Western capitalist economies and Soviet Union, almost till the late 1950's the theoretical underpinnings of praxis were devoid of strength as well as universal appeal (Hadjimichalis, 1987: 15).

Drawn heavily upon advanced western models, "for the less developed countries, this material (on development theories) has the disadvantage that it is written from a very different point of view. In fact, one is compelled to admit that it is distinctly lacking in sympathy for the problems of these countries" (Wallich, 1973: 189). Nonetheless, the imperatives of capitalist development<sup>2</sup> were such that the only

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1. The German theorist August Losch maintained that if reality failed to corroborate his model, the fault lay with reality.
  2. That is, the specialisation of production and consumption of commodities in place of general competence and mass subsistence activities. It also encompasses the general monopoly of wage labour and usually involves the redefinition of needs in terms of goods and services produced on mass scale as per expert planning.

solution to underdeveloped nations seemed to be *modernisation*. This prescription by the experts of the United Nations as early as in 1951 was, of course, based upon their recognition of distinctions between international, inter-sectoral as also sub-national disparities (Hadjimichalis, 1987: 16). The predominant questions became those of location of investment, its possible spread, its impacts on backward and non-responsive regions, and so on. This constituted the core of neo-classical regional development theory.

Eventually, the neo-classical regional development theories were to be cognisable with the labour-surplus model, which essentially pitched the analysis on the *given* sectoral dualism of the economy, namely, the traditional and the modern sectors. Such a distinction implied that the traditional sector lacked resource endowment, better technology, skilled labour and high propensity to save (being primarily low efficient, rural and agriculture based). The modern sector, on the contrary, had almost everything that the traditional counterpart was so deficient in. On the logic of growth and comparative advantage doctrines the desirability of accelerating the development of a few *leading regions* has been much discussed (Rodwin, 1969: 52-58). Presuming development process to be unidirectional and the existence of backward regions to be almost-natural events in history, the eventual (or providential!) stages of economic growth, it was theorized, involved 'economic modernization' and some time for the transition (Rostow, 1960).

Now that the *diagnosis* of the problematique was over, the means to *solve* the same was not too far. Within the neo-classical tradition, at least two distinct sets of approaches emerged to tackle the question of uneven development. The first set of views, originated from the *marginalists*, or the *technocrats*, who envisaged the interregional market system to work in such a way as to *equilibrate* the undesirable effects of spatial disparities; as may be expected in a situation of free movement of labour and capital based on perfect information about the market. This approach considers the existence of regional inequalities as a transitory phenomenon and holds, the same to wither away as economic development occurs. The message, it seemed, was clear, simple and practicable - "to promote 'regional economic growth' through induced urban-industrialisation" (Weaver, 1984: 79).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>. See, also, the papers contained in Weiner (1966), for various aspects of modernisation approaches.

The ubiquitous growth of and interest in regional science and spatial planning, particularly in the U.S. and Europe, during the 1950s and 1960s marked the heyday of regional planning era. The Regional Science Association was founded by Walter Isard in the US. Spatial planning became a major state activity in the European countries, notably, the UK, France, Germany and Italy. Taking extensive clues from their predecessors - von Thunen, Weber, Losch, and Christaller, among others<sup>4</sup> the new generation of *regional scientists* assigned the central position, in their analysis, to the location of economic activity. Based on the merits of the concepts of regional complementarity and growing regional interdependence, the economic growth of a region, it was argued, depended upon "increasing the territorial division of labour, decreasing the friction of distance, and augmenting the level of interregional trade" (Weaver, 1984: 80). Such theorisation primarily derives from the discussions of North (1955) on export-based regional growth. Later, scholars like Tiebout (1956); Perloff *et al.* (1960); Borts and Stein (1962); Richardson (1969; 1973; also 1978); and Thompson (1968) have worked in similar lines. The above thesis, however, assumes that (a) interregional trade and resultant accumulation and flows of both revenue and capital are decisive to growth, and (b) trade in a market economy follows the sound principles of comparative advantage and equal exchange.

The extensive literature on location (mostly, industrial) theories,<sup>5</sup> as found in the numerous papers, proceedings and journals of the Regional Science Association by Walter Isard (and his countless followers) and his most-widely known works - *Methods of Regional Analysis* (1960) and *Location and Space Economy* (1972) - are presented in the most typical neo-classical equilibrium framework. Emphasizing the significance of 'transport inputs to production', he contended that "market mechanisms would arrange economic activities in their optimal, profit-maximising locations, creating an hierarchical economic landscape based largely on substituting transport costs for other production inputs... All other things being equal, this logic suggested that, eventually, most economic activities should gravitate towards the same selected set of locations. Ultimately the locational problem would be solved through development of an urban network of 'nodes' and 'linkages'..." (Weaver, 1984: 80).

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4. For a critical note on their contribution to the field of post-war regional science, see, Holland (1976: 2-12).

5. For comprehensive reviews, see, Meyer (1965) and Brown (1969). Also, see, Kuklinski (1987) and Isard (1987) for an appraisal of regional policies.

Theoretically, such urban system is conceived as being unlimited.

The whole range of analyses of the above type is based on the most unrealistic assumptions, such as, uniformity of transport surface; uniform distribution of the consuming population; homogeneity of structure and performance of firms and sectors; and differentiation of regions only on the basis of size and distance, not structural composition. An intensive critique of Isard's work observes, "if anything, its influence has been perverse, obstructing relevant theory, technique and policy" (Holland, 1976: 18; also 18-29). This is so, not just because it suffers from the same 'idealistic misconceptions' of neo-classical economics, but "most of existing industrial location theory is placed within an ideology which defines its object and mode of analysis in a way which makes effective analysis (of spatial development with reference to the overall development of capitalism) impossible" (Massey, 1977: 196. Diction in parentheses ours).

Nevertheless, the theories of regional *self-balance* (in other words, the neo-classical approach) were not to disengage attention by very many well-known scholars. For instance, it has been remarked that the unreal notion of self-balance is "an analog to the outcome of equilibrium in the price determination model of neo-classical economics" (Wilmoth, 1978: 45). Holland (1976) presents an excellent exposition of such studies and observes, "they fail to appreciate that their reasoning is almost entirely circular, and that in genuinely scientific terms it is a *cul-de-sac* leading nowhere" (Holland, 1976: 29; also 29-34).

The obsession with *scientific positivism* of the neo-classical approach has, in a sense, disabled the locational analysis to go beyond *pattern to process* which involves coming to terms with the issues of perception and motivation. "Once outside the framework of 'economic man', whose freedom or failings in these spheres are assumed away, the fact that locational actors are seen to evidence real choice and the pull of subjective evaluations suggests that nonpositivist modes of understanding are called for" (Wallace, 1978: 96-97). Or, as Bramanti (1999: 634) would propose, plain and simple, "To mention something significant and interesting regarding the spatial localisation of economic activities, we must step away from a reference point constructed around constant scale returns and perfect competition.

The rationality of localised economic behaviour can re-emerge only if we let go of the interpretation of the firm as an optimiser in resource allocation..."<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Institutionalists and Imbalances

The alternative approach came from the so-called non-Marxist *liberals* (who, organically, were inseparable from the 'establishment') for whom state intervention was the *only* panacea. This prominent branch of the interventionist school, better known as the *institutionalists*, recognised the mal-functioning of the market and certainly did not have faith in the aforesaid process of attaining equilibrium in the 'self-balance' approach. Their reaction may be presented as follows:

"Migrants are misinformed and migration is selective, thereby increasing wage differences between regions. Investors, likewise, seem to overvalue already productive regions, respond to agglomerative efficiencies and in other way contribute to the disequilibria. Finally, diffusion of information is very slow, national backwaters always lagging behind the centres of invention and innovation. The upshot: mechanisms for interregional market equilibrium are rusty, and they need both oil and applied force: the standard approach to regional planning..." (Goldsmith, 1978: 13).

As indicated earlier, a widely accepted notion regarding the perception of economic dualism had been "that a country dependent mainly on agricultural production, and with a high proportion of its population in agriculture, is 'backward' and that the path of progress is to get people, capital and a far higher share of total production into industry and towns" (Brookfield, 1977: 70-71). Even in the early 1940s, it had been convincingly argued that industrialisation "is *the* way of achieving a more equal distribution of income between different areas of the world by raising incomes in depressed areas at a higher rate than in the rich areas" (Rosenstein-Rodan, 1943: 202).

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<sup>6</sup> Commenting on the *pseudo-objectivity* of positivism it is held that, "Through planning based on descriptive models, we consequently run the risk of imposing on reality a strictness which it neither has nor ought to have... we shall be left with a society which mirrors the techniques by which we measure it. At the end is a society of puppets with no dreams to dream and nothing to be sorry for" (Olsson, 1975: 495-496. Also, Weisskopf, 1971: 85).

The case for industrialisation as a moving force towards realizing higher incomes and acting against 'backwardness', however, had its proofs in the history of industrial societies as, for instance, in the UK, France, Germany and the US. The Cambridge Conference Report (1971: 65) observed: "it goes without saying that everybody in developing countries wants to industrialise swiftly. Industry glitters with promise. Nothing else seems to hold out much hope of fulfilling the expectations of new nationalism, winning economic independence and raising average prosperity dramatically; nothing else seems drastic enough to cast off the millstones of population increase and falling prices for primary producers that, in spite of their doubled efforts, have made them worse off than before". Similar views were echoed by almost all developing countries then (see, for instance, Griffith, 1991; Ikram, 1971; de Figueiredo, 1971; and Robinson, 1964). Nehru (1958: 368) expressed it thus, "Now, India, we are bound to be industrialised, we are trying to be industrialised, we want to be industrialised, we must be industrialised". The resultant growth of urban-industrial bias in development literature was just a natural response; in any case, regional imbalances persisted, *even* in those nations, which made significant progress in both industrialisation and urbanisation.

It would be important to examine the 'imbalance theories' as attempts at explaining such dualism. The conspicuous spatio-historical patterns of uneven development, intrinsically, is a reflection of the operational mechanisms of the capitalist process itself, the process through which "*formal* subordination of human activity to capital, exercised through the market", has been made possible (Harvey, 1982: 373). "Most fundamentally, the capitalist organization of work, reinforced by the market place and by legal, religious, political and social institutions, generated inequality as one class of people accumulates surplus produced by others" (Goldsmith, 1978: 14). The tendency of spatially differentiated development under capitalism, specifically in the form of urban-industrial growth, it was recognised, once set in would hardly result in the reduction in disparities. In fact, "contrary to the general prediction of the neo-classical economics, any tendency toward regional balance is offset by powerful counter-tendencies toward imbalance" (Stilwell, 1978: 20).

However, advocated the institutionalists, in a capitalistic system, imbalance held the key to regional growth and certain undesirable tendencies could be prevented through effective state intervention. Regional imbalance theories as they come to be known as the most explicit and highly influential writings in this realm are contained in two independent studies in 1957, Gunnar Myrdal's *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions* and in 1958, Albert O. Hirschman's *The Strategy of*

*Economic Development*.<sup>7</sup> These two 'epoch making' works determined the future course of regional planning in many countries, at least till the close of the 1970s. Myrdal (1964), based on what he termed as *circular and cumulative causation*, held the view that spatial inequalities would be the indispensable part of the process of capitalist development. The spatial consequences of concentrated growth were explained through the *backwash* and *spread* effects, representing the negative and positive aspects, respectively, of the process. Hirschman, although, unlike Myrdal, maintained an apolitical stand, on the problem of inequality, was equally articulate in explaining the spatial dynamics of capitalist development. Describing the same phenomena of backwash and spread effects, he only used concepts such as *polarization* and *trickle-down* effects, respectively.

It was mainly due to their divergent ideological positions that their prescriptions to contain regional imbalances through state intervention varied largely in degree, than in content. Whereas Myrdal advocated extensive and strong government action, Hirschman suggested minimal state intervention, only in providing incentives and *social overheads* in backward regions so as to attract capital to hasten industrialization in lagging pockets.

Thus, the core of the regional development policies, at least until the mid-1970s, remained the modernisation paradigm (of inducing an urban-industrial growth in rural regions), which essentially formed the initial framework of the strategies of deconcentration. It was based on the argument that "higher levels of industrialisation in rural-peripheral regions are a necessary condition to achieve lower levels of inter-regional urban concentration and to decrease the magnitude of regional inequalities" (Uribe-Echevarria, 1991: 5). Policy formulations varied only in their emphasis on different aspects of modernisation - creation of agglomeration economies, fast diffusion of growth-inducing innovations and strengthening of distributive forces. However, in order to achieve the desired objectives, the concepts that remained the most influential through out the 1960s and 1970s were certainly, *growth poles* and *growth centres*.

#### ***i. Growth Pole Approach***

The concept of growth pole can originally be traced back to the writings of Perroux (1950; 1972), which was later developed by, importantly, Friedmann (1966) and

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<sup>7</sup> See, also, Kaldor (1971) for a critical discussion on interventionist approaches.

Hermansen (1972). The primary concern of this approach was based on the interactions between the dominant industrial firms and other sectors of the economy. It was assumed that once a 'leading industry' is established (usually by the state) in a backward region it would generate economic growth through a process of regional industrialisation, economic modernisation and urbanisation. These propulsive firms, which would be generally large and oligopolistic, through a series of inter-industry linkages would provide the maximum multiplier effects. Consequently, it was argued, gradual structural transformation would modernise the local economy and help integrating it into the national economy.

In reality, the results of application of such strategies have been highly inadequate and often disappointing as they have given rise to 'unexpected and undesirable' side effects (Higgins, 1978; also Stohr and Todtling, 1978). It has been pointed out that in almost all cases the so-called spread effects have been extremely limited resulting in scanty intra-regional linkages. The bases of the *leading industries* stuck out as *sore thumbs* in the otherwise backward regions (Higgins, 1978; Friedmann and Weaver, 1979; Stohr and Todtling, 1978; and Coraggio, 1975).

## **ii. Growth Centre Approach**

Unlike the growth poles, which were essentially placed in an *economic space*, the growth centres related to the *geographic space*. Based on a variety of considerations of industrial deconcentration and the structural factors acting as constraints to the industrialisation process, the scope of government intervention has been greatly enlarged under this approach. In a sense, the growth centre approach encompasses a *comprehensive intervention package* that includes a range of activities around the *dominant industry*, for instance, creation of infrastructural facilities; provision of financial incentives; dissemination of information and also adoption of regulatory measures to restrict clustering of industries in existing urban agglomeration. In another type of growth centre approach, known as intermediate city approach, a group of cities has been considered as the target. As per the neo-classical theory the intermediate size (population wise) cities have greater possibilities of drawing advantages from the net positive economies of scale and agglomeration (Richardson, 1973).

For a variety of reasons the growth centre approach, where a few centres are chosen for industrial location, came to be widely used in regional planning strategies. However, a number of studies were extremely critical about the

usefulness and effectiveness of such policies (Pederanga and Pernia, 1983; Mathur, 1978; Wong and Saigol, 1984; also Smith, 1977: 100-106 and 120-122). It was observed that the spread effects were restricted and linkages were much stronger with the metropolitan agglomerations rather than local economies. Though growth centres grew in some places, the overall tendency towards polarised growth was hardly offset by such instrument of state intervention.

More than the shortcomings in implementation (as often used as a defence by the proponents of growth centre strategy) the conceptual underpinnings came under severe attack. The failure of the growth pole/ growth centre approach lay in the fact that, whereas it fully concentrated its attention on the aspect of specific area development and removing physical and financial bottlenecks, it did not take into consideration the macro and sectoral aspects of the economy as affecting the growth process of the peripheral areas (Hammer, 1985; and Hilhorst, 1990: 275-284). The whole issue of broader trends (political economy and social space) determining the emergence/ perpetuation of backwardness was completely kept out of its purview.

### ***iii. Interventionism and Territorial Integration***

It may be indicated here that the analysis of the issues of regional planning during the post 1950s period was not without a shift from the traditional, i.e., pertaining to the preceding quarter century or so, approaches which emphasised *territorial integration*. It was a kind of blending of Utopian planning (bio-synthesis and a new culture—cultural regionalism) with comprehensive river basin development planning, as mostly occurred in North America (Friedmann and Weaver, 1979: 8). However, the major thrust of the 'new' approach became, what is called, *functional integration*. *Inter alia*,

"it emphasized the problem of *spatial organisation*; accordingly, it was preoccupied with urbanization, industrial location, and the creation of strong inter-city ties. The principal targets of this dimension were the newly industrializing, post-colonial countries. Here regional planning was associated with 'nation-building', central planning, and the spatial integration of the national economy" (Friendmann and Weaver, 1979: 6).

The next major departure in the field of regional planning strategies took place around mid-1970s, when the shift took place from functional integration to territorial

integration. As Forbes (1985: 132) would distinguish, "Whereas functional integration is essentially the centralised control and distribution of resources over a given space - that is, functionally compositional in context - territorial integration stresses the significance of human relationships in space, self-reliance, and the need to develop these resources contextually". The latter, a form of 'new decentralisation' was essentially "a basic needs strategy for territorial development" (Friedmann and Weaver, 1979: 193). This *abrupt* change in the approach was a direct response to the general policy shift of the early 1970s towards employment and poverty and the priority attached to agriculture and rural development. Intersectoral imbalances (mostly, as a consequence of neglect of agriculture) was thought to be allocation of growing regional inequalities and resource allocation away from urban industrial development, the probable corrective.

The resultant strategy of wider territorial development planning of rural areas, took its most sophisticated form in what came to be known as the agropolitan development approach (Friedmann and Douglass, 1978). Conceived and developed by Friedmann, this approach is sort of *diffuse urbanisation* of the countryside or promoting towns in the villages. Initially designed for six densely populated countries of South and South East Asia, including India, this approach, however, had undergone significant changes over the first decade. "Agropolitan development ... involves the mobilization of political communities primarily for their own benefit. It is a proposal to push political autonomy down to household, village, and district levels in countries where development still tends to be identified with forced industrialization and where elitist bias resists the strategy of the people... To modernize an economy requires, as a first step, a strengthened rural base. All other strategies are bound to fail" (Friedmann, 1988: 251). However, the agropolitan approach faced severe criticisms from various writers on various counts: the stringent conditions of application in field situation (Hilhorst, 1980: 36), failure to grapple with the *political and economic realities*, its negative view of rural-urban economic linkages; and its inherent theoretical contradictions of limiting "forces rooted in the political order and organised on a territorial basis".<sup>8</sup>

Almost as an alternative to agropolitan approach, a set of new strategies were put forward, based on the idea of small-scale industrialisation in rural areas, depending upon and supporting the agricultural sector. "Sustained industrialization in rural regions, necessary to achieve a relevant magnitude of deconcentration, requires

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<sup>8</sup>. A note on such criticisms is contained in Friedmann (1988: 237-238).

the emergence of outward-looking industries and consequently the transformation of the role of the sector itself in the regional economy" (Uribe-Echevarria, 1991: 37). This fresh approach in regional development, labeled as *The Other Policy* tries to blend macro-policies with appropriate choice of technology and small-scale industrialisation to promote rural economies (Uribe-Echevarria, 1990 and 1991; Ranis, 1990; Stewart and Ranis, 1990; and Saith, 1990 and 1992).

However, a near-complete disenchantment with the expectations from regional planning has, perhaps, come from its incapacity in practice, in particular, in failing to ensure the much-touted 'trickle down' and/ or 'spread effects'. The "professionals' disappointment" with regional planning has been expressed thus: "At the end of three decades of regional planning efforts to reduce regional disparities and spatial concentration, the situation that motivated these efforts has not been fundamentally altered... the experience of regional planning...has led to results which, in the most optimistic of cases, can only barely be called modest" (De Mattos, 1990: 26, as quoted in Guimaraes, 1997: 282).

Further, alternative strategies have been suggested focusing upon "the endogenous mobilization of resources and of regional innovative and adaptive capacities"; an excellent exposition of this approach has been provided in Stohr (1987). These approaches are in contrast to the typical institutionalist prescription of external transfers to lagging regions, or what has been termed *development from above*. Nevertheless, interest in endogenous local development through 'bottom-up' planning process, that underscores democratic decentralisation and participation between technical expertise and the civil society, has begun to find notable space in the discourse on regional development and holds much hope having considered the political dimensions of the territories (D'Aquino, 2002; and *Debat*, 2002). Special problems of developing countries have been given emphasis in these strategies of regional regeneration.

#### **4. Dependent Periphery and the Scalar Catch**

In an altogether different sphere, primarily as a reaction to conventional development and spatial planning notions (which were obviously incongruous with the emerging global patterns of geographically uneven development, specifically in the case of Latin American and African nations) a new group of writers came up with explanations dealing with the intrinsic spatialized political economy of the

international division of labour and the *exploitation* of the *periphery* by the *centre* in a capitalist *world system*. Highlighting the aspects of capital circulation and exchange, often sidelining the importance of production relations the theorists (mostly trained economists) basically observed that the development of the capitalist *core* (in its various sectors as also locations) was being achieved/ effected through a series of complicated mechanisms of extracting the surplus from the underdeveloped *periphery*, the Third World. Such a process of the *development of underdevelopment* or the dependence between the centre and periphery, as has been described frequently in the relevant literature, came to be dealt with in the analyses commonly called the underdevelopment/ dependency theories.

Though these theories gained the widest global recognition and stimulated an ever-growing population of social thinkers and political activists since the mid-1960s (or, precisely since the publication of Andre Gunder Frank's *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* in 1967), the origins are surely to be tracked down to the classical theories of imperialism and, later, in the writings of Lenin and Luxemburg in the early twentieth century. The issue of exploitation of the colonies by the metropolis, or, what came to be known as the Asiatic mode of production, was part of the Marxian theories of imperialism, which concentrated upon the law of motion of the capitalist mode of production. The two prominent works in the similar tradition are Lenin (1964) and Luxemburg (1951). A comprehensive critique on their contributions is contained in Barratt Brown (1974: 48-72). Apart from Frank (1969 and 1978), the most well known proponents in this line of approach include, Wallerstein (1979 and 1989), Amin (1974 and 1977), Emmanuel (1972) and Baran and Sweezy (1966); other important studies being Hymer (1972a and 1972b); Sunkel (1973); and Coraggio (1975).

It would be both arduous and unfair on our part to offer a detailed review of the underdevelopment/ dependency literature here, partly because of its voluminosity and partly because of the vast range of issues dealt therein. Fortunately, besides the original texts, there exists a few but excellent critical surveys which throw light on the variety of issues analysed in the underdevelopment/ dependency theories (Brewer, 1980; Leys, 1977; Palma, 1978; Brenner, 1977; and Ramirez-Faria, 1991).

The immense popularity and general acknowledgement on the substantial contribution of this set of theories in understanding the process of underdevelopment notwithstanding, serious criticisms have been levelled against both the logic and applicability of underdevelopment/ dependency theories. As a full-fledged treatment of the critique of these theories is *not* our prime concern here, we would mention only a few major points of dissent which would be relevant to our forthcoming discussion.

In essence, with an *over-emphasis* upon the aspects of circulation and exchange of capital (as opposed to the autonomous development approach), the underdevelopment/ dependency thesis is all about the *geographical transfer of value* at a global level. Eventually, "This is both the source of some of its most powerful analytic observations and its most evident shortcomings" (Weaver, 1984: 120). Even though originally proposed as a critique of the dualism concept (the separation between the *modern* and the *traditional* or the *capitalist* and the *non-capitalist*), so basic to the Marxian theories of imperialism, the underdevelopment/ dependency model "has failed to transcend these origins and has ended up being confined by the mirror-image limitations of the diffusionist problematic" (Forbes, 1985: 70). Consequently, the model, possibly inadvertently, elaborates the contrapositive aspects, viz., process of development and process of underdevelopment, or higher global interdependence or higher self-reliance (as against global economic ties). Such adherence to dualism in capitalist development analysis has been considered unscientific (Leys, 1977: 96-97) as it could not capture the important role played by the market forces, by accepting the original Smithian view of market forces bringing about economic development via enhanced specialisation (Mandel, 1976: 43).

Further, the inability to provide an adequate explanation of the causes of underdevelopment has been pointed out as a major weakness of the underdevelopment/ dependency theories. By trying to establish the exploitative relations between the core and the periphery, through mainly external factors and exchange, these theories have been more successful in justifying the perpetuation of underdevelopment (of the periphery, of course) than divulging the outcomes of the powerful interplay of the *local social relations and class struggle*. This notion of *place exploiting place* amounts to an over-simplification that treats the dependent social formations as *passive victims* in the process of capitalistic development. "This failure to recognise the significance of autonomous Third World histories, especially the process of class formation, or to highlight the resistance to

colonialism, represents a venture into a Euro-centrism that utterly fails to understand the two-way nature of the relationships between social formations" (Soja, 1989: 82).

The above, it has been argued, "rests upon a mainly technological explanation of the sources of increased productivity and, hence, wage increases" (Hadjimichalis, 1987: 44). The lack of discussion on the issue of class formation in the periphery has been considered as "more than a mere omission" (Forbes, 1985: 73). In fact, Leys (1977) observes that this reflects that the approach has been excessively *economistic* and *mechanistic*.

Importantly, despite the underdevelopment/ dependency theories being seriously debated and criticised, regarding their applicability at international level, they still are made use of as the indispensable tools of analysis with reference to issues of *intra-national spatial differentiation*. However, before we attempt to examine the problems and prospects of *borrowing* theories developed substantially at *other spatial scales*, it would be premonitive to note that "while much may be gleaned from such analysis for the study of spatial differentiation within a social formation, it is *not* possible simply to transplant them to a *lower level of spatial disaggregation*. The relations between nation states within world imperialism are not to be equated with 'inter-regional relations' within a nation" (Massey, 1978: 109). Such *simple transference* is perplexing not just because of the debility of the status and demarcation of region to be amenable to class analysis, but also due to the lack of justifiability to treat the *pre-given* region (*intra-national space*) as the object of analysis. Regions, unlike nations, do not enjoy fiscal and monetary independence and also are restricted in terms of trade and custom policies. Moreover, these are not politically autonomous.

Further, commenting on the fallacy of considering the distinction between the nature of regional problematic and that at the national level to be only a matter of size and/or scale, it has been remarked that, in such a situation "spatial form and scale are considered in the abstract forgetting that we are dealing with *social* divisions of territory and socially different types of territorial division" (Anderson, 1975: 15, quoted in Massey, 1978: 109). In fact, again, unlike nations, "regions must be constituted as *an effect of* analysis; they are thus defined in relation to spatial uneven development in the process of accumulation and its effects on social (including political) relations. Thus the analysis of the production of uneven development does not imply a pre-given regionalisation" (Massey, 1978: 110). This

aspect is important as the basic problem with most attempts at using *formally coherent* theoretical models is that their application has often been subject to weaknesses inherent in the models themselves. We shall consider a few such studies.

Reflecting upon the relations of dependence between the underdeveloped and the imperialist nations Szentes (1971),<sup>9</sup> observed that, "the collapse of the colonial system brought about the disappearance of the most extreme forms of dependence: legally independent and sovereign countries have come into existence in the territories liberated from the colonial yoke. But this in itself has not yet put an end to the relations of dependence. *On the one hand*, the economic and social structure itself,... provides now to a certain extent the basis for and the possibilities of maintaining the relations of dependence...and even produces objectively new ties of dependence, while *on the other hand* the imperialist countries, the monopolies, taking advantage of these possibilities, are introducing new forms and methods of reorganizing and strengthening the relations of dependence (neo-colonialism)" (Szentes, 1971: 166).

Similarly, the study of a specific region, namely, North East England, by Carney *et al* (1975) uses dependency theory for the purpose. The underdevelopment of the North East, they argue, could be traced to its basis of profitability which, historically, had involved shrinkage of wages and/ or creation of a huge mass of unemployed. This existed in an otherwise buoyant economy where high real wages and high level of consumerism were prevalent. Within the overall domestic market and where capitalist consumption grew side by side with state spending on preventing re-emergence of crises, only making way for continued accumulation of capital (Carney *et al*, 1975: 149). The use of the 'Frank thesis' can be seen in Carter (1974: 297-303), who, while critically applying his views on the Latin American case, questions the typical assumption of the bourgeois analyses that the Scottish Highlands is the *lagging* or *archaic* sector of a dual economy; Carter takes the idea of the dual economy from Belshaw (1965: 96).

Studies of this kind (e.g., Carney, 1980) however analytically rigorous, *do* carry the problem of *switching objects of analysis* from international to interregional,

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<sup>9</sup> See, particularly the discussion under Chapter II titled, "The external factors of the system of underdevelopment: economic dependence and income drain", in Szentes (1971: 166-228).

particularly at the empirical levels. The specific reference to the *local or indigenous* class structure and its manipulation from beyond the region has been sought to be explained through Frank's thesis. Anderson (1975) has raised basic questions about the suitability and validity of such an approach, as also a discussion in Harloe (1975: 166). Again, launching a *general attack* that concerns the tracing of such regional classes as an inevitable requirement in such type of approach, Lebas (1977) refers to the *creeping parochialism*, a characteristic often noted of research groups doing work 'on their region'. This incipient parochialism, compounded with the lack of concerted theoretical perspective, leads researchers to establish the questionable existence of *regional bourgeoisies* (Lebas, 1977: 84). This reaction is part of her dissatisfaction over the use of a historical perspective for sociological analysis of a given region. The studies she criticises here are those from the Rowntree Research Unit at Durham University and Carter (1974). According to her "the adoption of 'historical materialism' (in regional analysis) does not guarantee success when faced with the existence of 'coexistent' and interrelated modes of production" (Lebas, 1977: 83). In any case, argues Massey (1978: 111), these issues are clearly empirical questions.

A thorough evaluation of the approaches to analyse regional differentiation process, based on the concepts of unequal exchange, has been attempted by Lipietz and Sayer (1977) (as quoted in Massey, 1978: 111). The former integrates the concepts of 'external articulation' and 'unequal exchange in the broad sense' (geographical location of industries with varying degrees of organic composition) and 'integration' and 'unequal exchange in the narrow sense' (depending upon the spatial wage level differentiation). He observes that the unequal wages at the regional level exists as a consequence of the articulation of modes of production operating at the international level. He deals with the rather contradictory issue of existence of spatial wage variations as a form of unequal exchange at the regional level, while pointing to the fact of recent trends of high capital-intensive industrial investment as taking place in the peripheral regions. Raising this question at an empirical level he further explains that in a typical historical context it is not always possible to identify the specific forms capital's response to spatial differentiation take. For that reason the *present attractiveness* of the peripheral areas for major industrial investment cannot simply be understood through wage differentials alone.

In an almost opposite fashion Sayer criticises the unequal exchange approach at an empirical level and observes that unequal exchange is not likely to take place at a regional level, "unless there is some institutionalised differentiation of wages within

each sector (e.g., apartheid)". Though there may be reluctance in accepting his position *a priori*, he has surely provided enough evidence towards validating his case.

Further points relate to the fact that the mere analysis of unequal exchange in the *narrow* sense simply *follows* from such a tendency at the broader spatial level. Hence, if at all, it is important to examine the latter and not to treat the regional unequal exchange issue as an isolated incidence. In this connection Massey (1978: 112) observes that "What remains unclear are both the implications of this in terms of the nature of regional 'inequality' (in that sense is this unequal exchange?) and the mechanisms of production of that inequality".

The dealing of regional problematique using the model of internal colonialism within a framework of imperialism is best presented in Hechter (1975), where he discusses the underdevelopment of the British Celtic fringe. "Far from maintaining that increased core-periphery contact results in social structural convergence, the internal colonial model posits an altogether different relationship between these regions. The core is seen to dominate the periphery politically and to exploit it materially. The internal colonial model does not predict national development following industrialization, except under exceptional circumstances" (Hechter, 1975: 9). His use of concepts like mode of production is more a reference to rural-urban differences than to class relations and modes of surplus labour appropriation. The influence of Gramsci is fairly vivid in his approach.

However, a critique of such an approach can be found in Lovering (1978) with reference to the Welsh economy. As regards the role of the state, the central concept in the theory of internal colonialism, he observes that, "the stress on the state as a deliberate conspiracy, able virtually at will to brainwash almost everyone, omits consideration of any contradictions built into the capitalist state... (The) conspiratorial conception of ideology, while attractively simple, actually confuses two distinct issues (1) the problem of the function of ideology, and (2) the question of how it is produced ..." (Lovering, 1978: 60). In his reappraisal he shows that the Wales economy can best be understood as a case of uneven development in a capitalist system, and holds that, at least, in terms of class structure and surplus outflows, the theory of internal colonialism "is a completely inadequate framework" (Lovering, 1978: 66). Criticisms of the application of internal colony model have also been made in Fox (1978) and Veltmeyer (1978), analysing the Sunbelt-Snowbelt controversy in the US and the lagging Atlantic Canada region,

respectively. In fact, they provide more sophisticated variants of dependency models, beyond that of internal colonialism. However, there are other studies which use variants of internal colony model to initiate their analyses; for instance, Overton (1978) on Newfoundland and Buechler and Buechler (1978) on Spanish Galicia.

At least two specific comments have been made regarding the application of these three aforesaid approaches. Firstly, all such studies inevitably start off with a *pre-given* region, without offering any *analytical justification* as to whether and how the same became the *result* of a process. Whereas, as discussed earlier, at an international level, this aspect hardly assumes the shape of a problem, "Concepts of 'inter-regional relationships' imply the definition of spatial entities with some degree of internal coherence, whether economic or political. Such definition must be the result of analysis; it cannot be an intuitive or *a priori* starting point" (Massey, 1978: 113).

Secondly, the political implications of such analyses have been subject to question. In a discussion of south Italy, Mingione (1977) observes that the *internal* regional imbalances which exist are not principally a result of imperialist exploitation. Rather they result from a process of centralisation and specialisation which is common to all capitalist development (Mingione, 1977: 94-95). And, hence, the *mechanical* extension of the theories of imperialism to underdeveloped regions can be misleading. The divergence becomes yet wider when one considers the political conclusions which these authors draw, ending by giving theoretical support to separatism, local nationalism and the rebellion of all the classes in underdeveloped areas against a hypothetical colonial domination (Mingione, 1977: 109). The most crucial point these issues raise has been put forward thus: "it is not clear how, politically, one should understand *dependence*, the concept of *a structurally deformed economy* or *externally-oriented accumulation* in a regional context. These are debates which link the analyses of 'regionalism' to those of nationalism and regional separatism" (Massey, 1978: 113).

## **5. Radical Geography and Spaces**

The non-existence of an *explicit* Marxian theory of regional development may be true, but that does not preclude the inherence of abundant clues to the issue as found in sporadic and unsystematic forms all through his major writings (Harvey: 1977). In fact, proficient revelations of such critical ideas were made available

through a number of studies appearing in the 1970s and, interestingly, the main body of the contributors were trained geographers, *not* economists. The construction of such a set of theories undoubtedly was intertwined with considerations of "intricacies of particular historico-geographic descriptions", and politics and social aspects of space.<sup>10</sup>

The re-emergence of profound interest in enquiring into the complex and potential nexus between the spatial form and social processes by the Marxist geographers was surely an important "attempt to explain the empirical outcomes of geographically uneven development (what geographers innocently called real differentiation) through its generative sources in the organizational structures, practices, and relations that constitute social life" (Soja, 1989: 51). Such *sudden infusion* of western Marxist theory and method into the "introverted intellectual ghetto of anglophonic Modern Geography" was actually the first major response to the "increasingly presumptive and theoretically reductionist positivism" of mainstream geographical analysis (Gregory, 1978). This eventually steered notable debate on the status of *space* as an abstraction and the spatial aspects of capitalism. An account of the controversy concerning the epistemological space can be found in Eliot-Hurst (1980), Dunford and Perrons (1983: 68-77), Gore (1984: 175-183) and Smith (1984: 66-96).

Undoubtedly, the most formidable theoretical assertion in the Marxian tradition regarding the criticality of space as the embodiment of *an intrinsic spatial problematic* in the history of capitalism was made by Henri Lefebvre, at least in two of his most thought-provoking works, namely *The Survival of Capitalism* in 1976 and *La Production de l'espace* in 1974. Capitalism, both for its existence and growth indulge in fragmentation, homogenisation and hierarchisation of space in order to dominate over, and hence, appropriate the material (and social) nature. It is this unending process of production and reproduction of space that makes the emergence of uneven development almost a sure by-product. It activates through a series of levels (often unintelligible) of spatiality that is ridden with both the tendencies of *coherence* as also *conflicts*. "Around each point and each centre in

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<sup>10.</sup> A few instances of major studies in these lines include: *Theoretical formulations on spatial configuration*: Harvey (1977); Palloix (1975); Soja (1980) and Hadjimichalis (1987). *Politics of space and role of space in social reproduction*: Lefebvre (1976). *Urbanisation*: Castells (1977); Harvey (1973). *Foreign trade and comparative advantage*: Shaikh (1979-80). *Regional development*: To be found here in the following discussion.

social (urban) space, whether large or small, temporary or lasting, there is both a local order, the order of the neighbourhood, and on a broader scale, a more distant order, the order of society as a whole (of the relations of production and the state). Difference, therefore, exists between these levels. Each, on its own account, constitutes an order, a sought-for cohesion. Conflicts between these orders are not unusual...These dialectised, conflictive space is where the reproduction of the relations of production is achieved. It is this space that produces reproduction by introducing into its multiple contradictions" (Lefebvre, 1976: 18-19). And he held that these contradictions must be probed into so as to understand the role of capitalism in creating a spatial order.

Lefebvre's exposition of the concept of spatiality drew mainly from his studies of urbanism. In the similar spirit Mandel had examined regional inequalities under capitalism. He observed that "the unequal development between regions and nations is the very essence of capitalism, on the same level as the exploitation of labour by capital" (Mandel, 1976: 43). His discourse on the spatial problematic (in his *Late Capitalism*), both at the international as well as regional levels, involved detailed probing into the political economy of differentiation mechanism, as closely linked to the process of capital accumulation itself. Analysing the eventualities of geographical uneven development from a historical perspective, his work remains one of the "most rigorous and systematic Marxist analyses" ever written on the subject (Soja, 1989: 82).

Even as the status of space remained unresolved in the arena of radical geography, the explanations in geographical unevenness assumed worthwhile dilation with substantive *Marxification* of analyses and interpretations. The substantial contributions in this connection appeared in the journal *Antipode*, which during the 1970s had the highest circulation figures among the new radical journals in the social sciences, and *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. The radicalisation of modern geography was inspired by a series of leftward turns taken by some of the most prominent anglo-phonetic geographers of the time. The array of issues of spatialisation assayed on the anvil of political economy included "the patterns of land rent and land use, the variegated form of the built environment, the location of industry and transport routes, the evolution of urban forms and the ecology of urbanization, the functional hierarchy of settlements, the mosaic of uneven regional development, the diffusion of innovations, the evocations of cognitive or 'mental' maps, the inequalities in the wealth of nations, the formation

and transformation of geographical landscapes from the local to the global" (Soja, 1989: 52).

A range of discrete Marxian approaches to regionalism emerged, but differed substantially by individual methodologies. Given that, they held a fundamentally different view of space as opposed to the non-Marxist regional scientists (Forbes, 1985: 119). According to Salinas and Moulaert (1983: 4-5), "the regional scientist views spatial analysis as a highly specialised examination of one aspect of social behaviour - especially economic behaviour. The regional political economist explains spatial organization as a manifestation of the logic of the social system itself... To understand how... struggles to gain, maintain, and increase control over surplus operate over space is to understand the logic behind the development of spatial organization in a society. Spatial organization reflects those struggles and the underlying social relations of production".

Essentially, the analyses of uneven spatial development, or of class formation and conflict within a spatial dimension, were carried out in two overtly discernible traditions of radical thought: studies of urban geography and studies of the political economy of international development and imperialism. The former, concerned with the urbanization under capitalism, debated over the issues of interwork between social processes and spatial forms (or what is described as the 'socio-spatial dialectic'), the most important inspirers being David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973) and Manuel Castells' *The Urban Question* (1977).

The almost ineluctable enquiry into tracing the *real* causes of uneven development, though *heterogeneous* in character, led to, broadly speaking, on the one hand, drawing heavily upon general laws and abstract theorisations concerning the capitalist process of production (autonomous or semi-autonomous development thesis). And on the other, a square replication of the models adopted to explicate *international* discrepancies in development, well known as underdevelopment theories.

The autonomous development proposition stresses the self-expansion of capital, which, being highly mobile, constantly endeavours to dismantle the barriers posed by space, through the reduction of time of circulation, or, what Marx calls the *annihilation of space by time*. The very nature of capital to accumulate at a faster pace is such that the time of circulation becomes an important consideration in relation to, of course, the time of production. "The expansion and contraction of the

time of circulation operate.... as negative limits to the contraction or expansion of the time of production or of the extent to which a capital of a given size functions as productive capital" (Marx, 1978: 128). In order to achieve this end "an *intensification* of capital's presence and penetration of space" (Walker, 1978: 31) results in promoting the forces of production as also circulation through investment in fixed capital, transportation and communications network, technical innovation, organisational reshuffling, provision of easy credit system, sales enhancement activities, etc.<sup>11</sup> Hence, "while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e., to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time... The more developed the capital... the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time" (Marx, 1974: 539).

For capital, to put it otherwise, creation or neglect (or, even destruction) of space (not in an areal sense, but the socially produced space) is conditioned upon the provision or absence of spatial use-value (with reference to the labour and capital of a specific location), operation of distinct production processes and nature of the product at the place (Hadjimichalis, 1987: 40). This, eventually, would produce underdeveloped regions as the capitalist process of production gains both higher momentum as well as ubiquitous mobility. Even factors like sectoral composition and its dynamics (effected through exports) could be important causes of regional differentiation (Markusen, 1983; referred to in Hadjimichalis, 1987: 40). However, such a view that spatial differentiation is a manifestation of the contradictions of capitalist accumulation *within* the regions had been presented earlier by both Lenin (1964) and Bukharin (1972).

The autonomous development approach somehow was both inadequate and unconvincing. The unusual focus on the role of capital in manipulating the events in space and time either leads to circular reasoning or economic determinism. Also, considering regional development as a result of autonomous growth of local productive sources *only* is losing sight of important interactions that might exist between various sectors and firms beyond the given geographical boundaries. The role of state as a major intervening agency as also the significance of political action in the process of capitalist development have been grossly neglected. "Thus, the

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<sup>11</sup>. For an in-depth analysis, based on extensive references to Marx's views on the subject, see, Harvey (1977: 268-274).

spatial organization of society is taken as a simple by-product of the capitalist production, as a passive container of productive forces" (Hadjimichalis, 1987: 42).

For all practical purposes, the state-sponsored regional development policies cannot be assumed to be *neutral*, i.e., (as if) "it offers a technically rational way of choosing the best means to achieve the given ends" (Gore, 1984: 263). In actuality "*they are EXPLICITLY biased against spatially defined groups and IMPLICITLY biased in favour of socially defined groups*" (Gore, 1984: 262; emphasis in original). This *chameleon-like* in-built characteristics of regional policies, it has been argued, renders their *social* image irrelevant (Pickvance, 1981: 260).

Whereas the irreversibility of regional policies seems altruistic, the tentacles of uneven development have grown sharper and deeper. Does political praxis against capitalist domination lead to the light at the end of the tunnel? The answer is riddled with hopes and uncertainties. For the hopeful, "even in the midst of widespread defeats, it is to a working-class movement that we must look for an end to the pattern of uneven development... (T)he goal is to create socially determined patterns of differentiation and equalization which are driven not by the logic of capital but by genuine social choice... It is not merely capital that must be restructured but the political basis of society, in order to produce a genuine social geography" (Smith, 1984: 159). For the not-so-hopeful, "any change in the methods of production and in the modes of provision and of use of collective services, or indeed in other aspects of the regulation of capitalism, would of course lead to a profound reshaping of the geographical environment. But whether a transformation of the foundations of the regime of intensive accumulation which safeguards the reproduction of the wage relation and which respects the law of accumulation is possible is, at the moment, an open question" (Dunford and Perrons, 1983: 359).

Nevertheless, the relevance of space in analyses of economic affairs has continued to grow over the decades and has been influencing as also influenced by the dynamic, if disjointed, course of history of geographies. As Scott (2000: 496) would argue, "space becomes not less important but more important with the passage of historical time, not just because it is a domain of strategic resources offering ever more subtle opportunities for economic contestation and differentiation, but also and concomitantly because of its reassertion as a medium of social and political action, i.e., as a constantly changing assemblage of territorial interests in the new global economy".

## 6. Neo-localism : *Rediscovering* the Dynamic Region

While the discourse on space continued to advance, with the nuanced cultural geography filling quite some space with refereshing ideas and uncommonly rich references, the contemporaneous rise of neo-localism,<sup>12</sup> as expressed through the localisation-globalisation interconnectedness, sparked the *rediscovery* of the dynamic region that was not just the *economic* space but also “*relational space*, capable of implementing and breaking down the stimuli, the ways of diffusion and the dynamics of adjustment in a broad sense” (Bramanti, 1999: 635). Most of the 1980s and early 1990s, interestingly, was the period when a wide variety of conceptual categories concerning, broadly, territorial/ spatial dynamism and reconfiguration of organisation of production instilled immense energy in research (and action) on regional development issues. Some of the prominent ones (for which only barely indicative, but substantive, references are given here) are post-modernism (Harvey, 1989), fordism/ post-fordism (Jessop, 1992), flexible specialisation (Piore and Sabel, 1984; and Sabel, 1988), flexibility (Pollert, 1991), path dependence (Arthur, 1989 and 1994), innovative milieu (Aydalot, 1986 and 1989), industrial districts (Becattini, 1992), social capital (Putnam *et al*, 1993), trust (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984; and Gambetta, 1988), networks (Camagni, 1991; and Cooke and Morgan, 1998), embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985), competitive advantage (Porter, 1990), modes of regulation (Lipietz, 1986; and Benko and Lipietz, 1998), new economic geography (Krugman, 1992), untraded interdependencies (Dosi, 1987; Lundvall, 1992; and Storper, 1995) learning economy (Dosi, 1988; Lundvall and Johnson, 1994 and Asheim, 1999) and producer services (Marshall, 1988).

In an interesting review article, Storper (1995) identifies three main ‘schools’ in the *new* post-fordism debate, namely, those focus on institutions; those keen on industrial organisation and transactions; and those who enquire into technological change and learning. All these schools deal with different strands of new competition and role of the region but essentially offer partial analysis.

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<sup>12.</sup> “The essential differences (between neo-localism and old localism) are two. The first is that while old localism was ‘primordial’, unthinking, the new one is the outcome of free will, conscious choice; the former is ‘necessary and natural’, the second ‘voluntary and intentional’ (rational). The second difference is that the old localism tended to minimise contacts with the exterior, to maintain a strong closed boundary, while the new localism is quite aware of the rest of the world, and is quite open to interactions with it” (Strassoldo, 1992: 47).

Beyond the 'hard production systems orientation' in these aforesaid schools and also most regional economics, Storper argues (taking clues from Dosi, Lundvall and even Perroux), that there exist the uniquely precious untraded interdependencies between actors, that touch upon regional growth, differentiation, trade, technology and accumulation. According to him, "these untraded interdependencies, generate region-specific material and non-material assets in production. These assets are the central form of scarcity in contemporary capitalism, with its fantastic capacity for production of standardized outputs, essentially because they are not standardized" (Storper, 1995: 192).

In many ways, these apolitically pragmatic approaches to regional development have been remarkably popular during the last decade-and-a-half, or so. These are implemented enthusiastically in many nations, especially in the third world countries, numerous international agencies have been carrying forward these through variety of projects. It is unclear, though, by side-stepping (once more) the problems of endemic regional retardation, if these approaches could actually be contributing towards mitigation of regional differentiation in development and growth, especially in the third world context. For one thing, the whole question of labour in such approaches with a small firm focus is practically missing or assumed away, in the least (Hadjimichalis and Papamichos, 1990; and Das, 1999). And for the other, as Hilhorst (1996) would argue, these theories, by neglecting the agricultural sector fail to address the issue of comprehensive and sustainable local and regional development.

The obsessive insistence that the local can take off only with global linkage, or by aiming to be what has been termed *world class* (or, by being globally competitive) is often severely misplaced as much of such claim presumes a certain stage of progress already in place. The problem, contrarily, in fact, is to develop the lagging regions, as in most developing countries, which have been systematically discriminated against and are structurally unprepared to respond to the global stimuli.

Referring to the current conditions of *theoretical uncertainty* and the preponderance of the *political* nature of local and regional systems, it has been observed that local systems are as complex as, if different from, the national systems. "The smallness, openness, complexity and dynamic character of local areas basically entail that local development planners are forced to deal with unique, individual and path-dependent systems, in which unique events, history, characteristics and even

personalities may play as important a role in determining the success or failure of local development efforts as variables which are more amenable to analysis and modelling” (Guimaraes, 1997: 289-290).

## 7. Concluding Observations

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that divergent theoretical perspectives exist on the problematique of uneven development and regionalism. The concerns revolve around the explanation of pattern of disparate development and the ways and means by which a more desirable pattern may be made possible with or without state intervention. The mainstream theory of regional development, though, beset with limitations like unrealistic assumptions and improper understanding of the process, has continued to remain in the forefront of the debate. Also, it has been able to reproduce *ideas* and *solutions* on a massive scale. For the neo-classical, Keynesian and non-left liberal (neo-populist) theorists, the *space* is just an areal unit, where the only problem seems to be location of productive activity considering physical endowments, cost-distance and time as the essential elements in it. Thus, they presume the regions to be pre-given and homogeneous entities, and hence, amenable to mechanical spacio-statistical analysis. Under these circumstances, in many developing countries state intervention continues to be the panacea for all the ills of uneven development and regionalism. National and/or regional planning, having shifted its emphasis from areal to sectoral planning, seems to have *uncritically* relied upon the standard strategy of modern sector development.

This has been so, primarily due to equating the notion of development with that of *economic* development. The dynamics of relationship between space and societal change in effecting uneven development has been grossly neglected in studies of this nature. In an alternative approach towards explaining inter-regional imbalances within given national administrative boundaries, a number of Marxist scholars of political economy have gone to the extent of replicating underdevelopment/dependency theory, originally conceptualised to understand differential growth between nations, in analysing intra-national imbalances. This, however, has been questioned by the Marxist geographers, as, such analysis involves the problem of shifting scales from a macro level to a micro level without reference to the social, cultural and political distinctiveness between regions.

A significant contribution towards explicating the undercurrents of uneven development has been made in the field of modern or radical human geography. Making a clear distinction between geographical place and social space, they attribute regional differences to a complex interaction between spaces within the broader canvas of matured capitalism. They certainly provide incisive clues towards understanding the issue. However, these studies have been growingly concerned about regional problems within advanced capitalistic or, postmodernist societies.

The exceptional rise of the engagement with neo-localism during the last fifteen years or so, has further reinforced the negation of efforts to unravel the dynamics of uneven development and regionalism at the sub-national level at least. A grossly mechanistic-managerial approach to territorial progress has clearly undermined the political dimension of the local spaces.

This distancing of the *revolutionary* theory from the problems of developing countries reflects, on the one hand, the poverty of the theory of the underdeveloped state (if there is one) itself, and, on the other, the paucity of in-depth enquiries into the problematic of *persistence* of backwardness in certain pockets, despite intervention of sorts. Jettisoning efforts at indiscriminate replication of models developed for the matured capitalist economies, concerned scholars need to contribute to strategies, which will have a strong grounding in the many geographies *within* the developing nation.

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